

# The Mind's Eye: Reviews and Comment

North Adams State College

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## Editorial

### INVITATION

Hardly a living soul has not heard Thoreau's cry of distress, "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." Less well known is his follow-on thought, "What is called resignation is confirmed desperation."

The paradox and frustration for those who lead the life of the mind are that they have so small a part in it. When you trade in ideas for a living, the urge to say something and the need for a place to say it are over-riding. But, because publication is such a big deal, the mass of us, reluctantly resigned to silence, slide unawares into Thoreau's confirmed desperation.

The Mind's Eye is a smaller deal. In its pages you can say what you think about what you read, what you see and hear, what you feel, what you aspire to. Say, an article in this month's Atlantic gripped you. Not everybody manages to see the Atlantic. So share it with an abstract/review in The Mind's Eye.

It might be a film, a book, a piece of a book, a speech, a meeting. A scientific matter--the DNA recombinant controversy--that everyone should hear about. Social and political developments--the Maine and Mashpee Indian land claims that look so preposterous, but aren't. The changing face of religion, the growing problems of education, the nuclear arms race, poverty and hunger, business and industry, city and country, environmental degradation, poetry, the literary imagination, psychology, history, art, philosophy, music, Bill Bradley, or Luis Tiant.

You are invited to say something. This is the place.

### ON WRITING

Afraid of writing? The best writers are. See Sara Davidson's interview with Joan Didion in The New York Times Magazine, April 3. Miss Didion, on going into her study to write: "It's low dread every

morning. . . . It's a fear you're not going to get it right. You're going to ruin it. You're going to fail."

--Ed.--

### CHALLENGE TO CLEP

Tests for credit-by-examination are still regarded in some educational circles as something faintly disreputable. Educators have found reason to question their implications. Professor Carl Stecher of Salem State College has raised the latest challenge to one of these tests, the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP). Stecher has written a provocative article, "CLEP and the Great Credit Giveaway," in the March Change. Stecher's basic criticisms are of the uses and abuses of CLEP, the national norming standards, and the content of the five General Examinations: English Composition, Natural Science, Mathematics, Humanities, and Social Science-History. The article is well documented and researched; Stecher has done his homework.

As a result, the CLEP people will offer a rebuttal in the April Change. Certainly, it will contradict many of Stecher's interpretations and conclusions, based, by the way, on data provided by CLEP. For example, Stecher quotes the College Entrance Examination Board/Educational Testing Service as follows: "The typical (participating) institution granted credit to 74% of its students who submitted scores." Stecher calls this astonishing. Indeed it is, if true. (No such success rate is seen on this campus.)

Stecher's strictures against the national norming standards and the content of the General Examinations are more important and lie at the heart of the debate. Whatever approach CEEB/ETS takes to them, the response will be interesting. CEEB has previously acknowledged, "There are answers ready for opponents, but one can never be sure the answers are precisely cogent or sufficient" (College Board Review, Spring 1976).

The debate about projects like CLEP will never end, and this is quite as it should be. It



stimulates the credit-by-examination community to continuously examine, improve, and update its testing instruments. We will be back to you next month with CLEP's rejoinder.

--James Sulzman--

### OIL IN TROUBLED WATERS

The end of the trans-Alaska pipeline is in the port of Valdez. From there, supertankers will carry North Slope oil to the lower 48 states.

Valdez Harbor is a very dangerous place to get into. The inexplicably underexamined geography and meteorology of its sea approaches are explored in "The Valdez Connection," by Philip L. Fradkin in Audubon for March. The Gulf of Alaska enjoys the worst weather in the Northern Hemisphere: winds up to 120 miles per hour, huge waves, thick fogs, snowstorm whiteouts, and floating ice.

Valdez Arm is long, narrow, and storm-tossed, funneling down to a width of one mile where Middle Rock guards the harbor entrance. Incredibly, no real-life test of navigational problems was made before Valdez was designated as the pipeline terminal. (A month of trial runs is scheduled for this year.)

Fradkin's careful, detached, lengthy study identifies perils that leave the reader with his mouth open.

--CAM--

### SECOND BATTLE OF GUERNICA

Art is international, transcending borders--or so we are led to believe. But is art politics, economics, or the expression of beauty? And can an art museum dictate the terms of a nation's political persuasion?

The question is posed by Philip Nobile in the March Harper's ("Skirmish over 'Guernica'"). The nation is Spain. the museum is New York's Museum of Modern Art. The subject of disagreement is possession of Picasso's great mural, "Guernica," which has been on extended loan to the museum since 1943.

Picasso, although protesting freedom from political leanings, remained in life-long, self-imposed exile from his beloved Spain after the Civil War. He had painted

"Guernica" in a six-week frenzy following the brutal destruction of the ancient Basque capital in the first "trial" saturation bombing of a city, in 1937 by Franco--a forerunner of the horrors of World War II. The twenty-five foot work is in cubist-collage technique, painted in stark black, white, and gray images whose symbolism resists precise interpretation but whose overall impact is one of emotional intensity and unbearable agony.

Its meaning? Picasso stated simply that it expressed his "abhorrence of war and brutality." But years later, in 1969, he allowed, "The truth of the matter is that by means of 'Guernica' I have the pleasure of making a political statement every day in the middle of New York."

Obviously, while Franco was alive Spain did not want the painting, no matter how famous the artist. Now, with a change of government (although not yet to the genuine Spanish Republic stipulated by Picasso), Spain says it would like the painting back. The Museum of Modern Art does not wish to give it up; it is the "star" of the finest Picasso collection in the world.

The exact contents of Picasso's will have not been made public. Nor will the museum reveal them, other than to say that the conditions for return have not been met. Picasso's widow concurs. The controversy rages. "Guernica" does not go to Spain. Picasso enjoyed being in the center of a storm. I am sure his ghost relishes this one!

--Virginia Davis--

### JOURNALISM EDUCATION SWAMPED

Washington Post editor Ben Bradlee's imperious summons, "Woodstein!" (in the film version of All the President's Men) has been heard by all too many college undergraduates. So observes--to put words in his mouth--Ben H. Bagdikian, reporter, editor, respected critic of his calling, and currently lecturer in journalism education at UC-Berkeley in "Woodstein U.: Notes on the Mass Production and Questionable Education of Journalists" (Atlantic, March). Bagdikian sees problems abounding in journalism education.

"The growth rate is double the rate in all higher education." In 1975 there were over 64,000 declared journalism majors in U.S.



colleges and universities. There are, however, only 40,000 journalism jobs currently held on U.S. newspapers.

Why the boom? The increased interest in journalism has been attributed to the "Woodstein Phenomenon," i.e., the attraction of the idealistic young to the model set by the Washington Post's Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, whose investigative reporting toppled the Nixon gang. (Who said college students aren't idealistic any more? Why else would they choose a field in which there is demonstrably little chance of finding a job?)

Are they being well educated? These hordes of students are not always being given their money's worth. The sudden boom apparently has led to some pretty sloppy programs. Some schools, though (e.g, Missouri, Northwestern, Columbia), are consistently good.

Does a reporter need a journalism degree? Bagdikian's survey of 100 editors of large papers found that 58% preferred journalism graduates. Their staff situation: 65% of their recent employees and 60% of their current staffs came from journalism schools. But an interesting statistic: of 53 Pulitzer Prize-winning journalists in the last ten years, 75% did not major in journalism. In fact, the prize winners were generally hostile to journalism education.

Then, what justifies training in journalism? Two things. First, the technical training allows the student to make an intelligent career choice. Second, and more important to institutions of higher education, such programs exist in part "to impart to the potential journalist a knowledge of the proper role of journalism in society, the ethics implied by this role, an encouragement of empathy with people they will study for the rest of their careers, and some advice on what academic programs will provide lasting insight into society." Bagdikian notes, "Technical training without this comprehension is meaningless."

--Michael Haines--

#### HARD TIMES IN ALASKA

Hard times have come to Alaskan Eskimos with the crash of the Western Alaskan caribou herd

from a quarter million animals to 50,000 in five years. A culture is in jeopardy. A proud people is reduced to welfare. One of the culprits: the snowmobile. See John G. Mitchell's "Where Have All the Tutu Gone?" (March Audubon).

--CAM--

#### BLOOD IS THICKER THAN WATER

One of the consistent and continuous themes in the American experience is that this country has been, is, and will continue to be the land of opportunity for all. From de Tocqueville through Veblen and C.W. Mills social scientists and students of race and ethnic group relations have offered a variety of discrepant analyses, testimony, and assertion about the inevitable assimilation or "melting" of American minority groups.

This optimistic ideology may very well have obstructed our ability to explore and construct wider imageries of the assimilability of the diverse peoples who followed the English to these shores. Events of the 1960's and early 1970's have caused us to re-examine our assumptions and perceptions. In the words of Glazer and Moynihan, "The persisting facts of ethnicity demand attention, understanding, and accommodation" (Beyond the Melting Pot, 1963).

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In a new book, Ethnicity: Theory and Experience, edited by Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan (Harvard University Press, 1975), a theoretical as well as empirical analysis is offered to deal with new phenomena of ethnicity and to help us see even further beyond the melting pot. Of particular interest in this volume is a contribution by Andrew M. Greeley and William C. McCready--both of the National Opinion Research Center--"The Transmission of Cultural Heritages: The Case of the Irish and the Italians." For one who has studied seriously the process of assimilation of the Portuguese immigrant in America, the Greeley and McCready paper provides a potentially fruitful model and raises some hard questions concerning the role of cultural heritage and ethnic identity.

The study answers one central question: do the cultural heritages of the Old World persist among the children and grandchildren of



immigrants from the various European countries? Two ethnic groups, the Irish Catholics and the Italians, were chosen for comparison on the basis of 75 hypotheses, using the Anglo-Saxon American as the norm. The attitudes, values, and behavior measured included personality traits (for example, trust, authoritarianism, anxiety), political participation, moral issues (such as sexuality and drinking behavior), respect for the democratic process, and attitudes toward family structure.

The investigators' hypothetical predictions were correct at a statistically significant level 34 times and incorrect 18 times at a significant level in the opposite direction. Thus, in 52 of the 75 comparisons, the three ethnic groups exhibited "significant" differences.

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A few examples of the findings. In certain personality variables the Irish are less "anxious" and "authoritarian" and more "trusting" than the Italians and the Anglo-Saxon Americans. In political participation the Irish score higher. In the category "moral issues" the Italians are less likely to have alcohol problems than the Irish and are more likely to be restrictive of both male and female sexual behavior.

Both Irish and Anglo-Saxons have higher scores on the democratic process scale than do Italians, a finding which is at odds with the popular myth of the Irish as hardhat, lunchpail reactionary, anti-Semitic racists. In the final category the Italians prove more traditional on family ties, while the Irish are more traditional on the role of women.

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The implications of Greeley and McCready's work are many and varied. If one knows the indigenous character of the countries of origin, one can make successful predictions in certain directions about two-thirds of

the time--a degree of probability somewhat superior to tossing a coin. Many commentators on American life tend to assume that Old World heritages are irrelevant to an understanding of the perceptions and behavior of ethnic groups. This study would refute such a position. The European tradition is more important and complex than most of us would have thought.

Here we have an effort to deal with the logos of the phenomenology of consciousness of immigrant groups, the groundwork for which is laid in ethnicity. This is a problem worthy of scholarly examination not merely because an analysis of ethnicity puts us in touch with our roots on romantic grounds--a knowledge without which we are bound to encounter some distress--but rather because such knowledge will afford us more positive, creative, and dynamic modalities with which to apprehend the process of assimilation in American society.

--Sam Gomez--

#### OUT-OF-THE-WAY

Some attractive pieces in under-used journals.

"Physical Science as Humane Inquiry," by R. B. Smith. J. of College Science Teaching, January.

"Why Speech Will Not Totally Replace Writing," by Thomas M. Sawyer. College Composition and Communication, February.

"Mental Heck," by Fred Foldvary. Journal of Recreational Mathematics, vol. 9, no. 1. A variation of the card game called "Oh Hell."

"A Playground--Why Not Let the Children Create It?" by A. B. Suter. Young Children, March.

"Blending Career Education Concepts with the Foreign Language Curriculum: Responding to the Challenge," by Ann A. Beusch and William DeLorenzo. Foreign Language Annals, February.

"Forum: Censorship, the Law, and the Teacher of English." Four articles in English Journal, March.

--Ann Terryberry--

The Mind's Eye will appear monthly when the college is in session. Members of the college community are invited to participate as editors and contributors. Suggestions as to coverage, format, and content are sought. Editorial Board: Stephen A. Green, R. Michael Haines, Charles A. McIsaac, Thomas A. Mulkeen. Editor: Charles A. McIsaac.